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# Waiver Wise

## Technical Assistance for the Community Options Program Waiver COP-W

Wisconsin Department of Health & Family Services • Division of Disability and Elder Services  
Bureau of Aging & Long Term Care Resources

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### Supportive Home Care Services

This document highlights general information about SPC 104 - supportive home care services.

#### **Background on Supportive Home Care Services**

Supportive Home Care (SHC) encompasses a range of services that provide necessary assistance for eligible persons in order to meet their daily living needs, ensure adequate functioning in their home, and safely access their community. Services provided by the SHC worker may include assistance with activities of daily living, attendant care, supervision, reporting changes in the participant's condition, assistance with medication and medical procedures which are normally self-administered, or the extension of therapy services, ambulation and exercise. SHC services may also include assistance with personal cares (e.g., grooming, bathing, toileting and dressing). In addition, allowable Supportive Home Care services may include those tasks associated with routine household upkeep, including general housekeeping chores, lawn mowing, snow removal, changing storm or screen windows and other household services that are essential to the participant's safety, well being, and care at home.

#### **SHC excludes:**

- ◆ household maintenance that changes the physical structure of the home,
- ◆ general household maintenance activities including painting, plumbing or electrical repairs as well as exterior maintenance, and
- ◆ general lot/landscape maintenance work including gardening, pruning and tree trimming.

#### **Commonly Asked Questions**

***Question 1 – Can the waiver program fund the cost of packing, unpacking, and transporting a participant's belongings from one residence to another when he/she decides to move? Can the waiver program pay a Supportive Home Care (SHC) worker to clean the previous residence once the participant has moved to his/her new residence?***

This depends on who is providing the service. The waiver program can pay for a SHC worker to help pack and unpack a participant's belongings when he/she changes residences within Wisconsin. If the participant is moving out of state, the waiver

program will only pay for the packing of the participant's belongings. Effective October 1994, there no longer was a distinction made between *completing* the task vs. *assisting* with the task. The primary issue is that the participant is unable to do these tasks for him/herself and needs some type of assistance.

**Note:** The participant does not need to be present to help orchestrate the move, though best practice would dictate this to be a good idea. The SHC worker's time and travel costs should be incorporated into one SHC rate for this task. As with all SHC workers, standards in Appendix N apply.

It is also permissible for the waiver program to pay the SHC worker to transport the participant's belongings to their new residence within Wisconsin. This can be funded whether or not the participant is in the vehicle. This cost can also be billed to SPC Code 104 – Supportive Home Care.

If the participant is required to clean a former residence when vacating in order to have a security deposit returned (i.e., in a rental apartment/home), the waiver program can pay the SHC worker to clean the previous residence. The cost should be billed to SPC Code 104.36 or 104.37 – Supportive Home Care. Waiver funds cannot be used to pay a SHC worker to clean a participant's non-rental property once he/she leaves the residence and permanently enters a nursing home or dies.

**Important note:** Waiver funds **cannot** be used to hire a moving company to complete any of the moving tasks. Waiver funds **cannot** be used to rent a vehicle (i.e., Ryder or U-haul) for the moving task.

It is also **not** permissible to have a SHC worker move items from one residence to another when the participant is temporarily in an institution. For example: Mrs. Jones is in a nursing home, and a decision is made that she will leave her home and move into a smaller apartment or move from her home/apartment to a substitute care facility. The participant and the care manager want the move and the potential clean up to occur prior to her discharge to ensure a smooth transition. Because the move and subsequent clean up is occurring while Mrs. Jones is in an institution, it is not allowable to use waiver funds. However, county policy may allow this under COP or other non-waiver funding sources.

***Question 2 – Can the waiver program pay for someone to paint the exterior of a participant's house? Can the waiver program pay for someone to paint the interior of a participant's home or apartment?***

No. The general upkeep of a participant's residence is seen as the responsibility of the participant or the participant's landlord. Although the SHC definition refers to "chore services, which are household maintenance," federal regulations have not recognized the painting of someone's home as household maintenance necessary to prevent institutionalization.

***Question 3 – A participant's home is infested with fleas, rodents, or cockroaches, etc. Can the waiver program fund the cost of one-time exterminator services?***

Yes. The cost of exterminator services can be billed to the waiver program (under SPC 104 – supportive home care) when these services provide a direct medical benefit to the

participant, are essential to guaranteeing a participant's safety and well being in his/her home, and are provided by a licensed exterminator. In rental property, it is likely to be the landlord's responsibility to finance the cost of needed exterminator services. **Note:** The waiver program will **not** fund the purchase of extermination products, such as flea bombs, bug sprays, foggers, or mouse traps, that can be purchased at a local store. This is to ensure participant's safety. In addition, waiver funds cannot be used to purchase an *exterminator service package plan*. Extermination services should be purchased as needed.

**Question 4 – Can waiver funds purchase service animals?**

No. CIP II and COP-W funds cannot be used to purchase a service animal. Although it is recognized that these animals provide valuable assistance to a waiver participant, federal guidelines do not recognize them as being waiver allowable at the current time.

**Question 5 – A waiver program participant will be obtaining a service animal (dog, monkey, etc.). For the participant to learn how to work with the service animal, he/she needs to attend a training program. Can the waiver program pay for: the training program's tuition, registration fee, up front commitment fee, cost of the care provided by an attendant who must accompany the participant, the attendant's room and board costs, the program participant's room and board costs, the travel costs associated with attending the training program, the service animal itself, or any equipment needed by the animal as it relates to their use as a support/service animal?**

The only two services the waiver program can fund are 1) if the participant needs an attendant while attending the training, the waiver can fund the cost for the attendant's time while he/she is providing care to the participant and 2) waiver funds can pay the transportation costs for both the participant and the attendant to attend a training program. This does not include air flights, bus tickets, or train tickets. Car mileage is the only transportation payable with waiver funds. As a reminder, waiver funds can never be used to rent or lease an accessible or non-accessible vehicle.

- ◆ **Note:** Transportation is only waiver allowable if it is within the participant's local community as determined by county policy. "Local community" is usually defined as the participant's extended neighborhood. It is the place where the participant may routinely shop, receive medical care/treatment, attend social or recreational events, or even where his/her employment is located. Local community is not necessarily limited to a participant's county. If the county does not currently have a fair and equitable policy defining local community, it is strongly recommended that one be developed. If the training is in a location outside of the participant's local community as defined by county policy, non-waiver funds may need to be utilized for transportation costs.

The following costs associated with a service animal are **not** allowable services/items under the waiver program:

- ◆ Any tuition costs associated with attending the training
- ◆ The participant's room and board costs
- ◆ The attendant's room and board costs
- ◆ The participant's meals

- ◆ The attendant's meals
- ◆ The purchase of the service animal
- ◆ Any kennel costs
- ◆ Any fees associated with transporting the service animal
- ◆ Any needed equipment (harness, leads, pouches, food, vet bills, medicine, muzzles, cages, etc.)

The cost of these items could be used a medical/remedial expense for Group B and C participants.

***Question 6 – Can a supportive home care (SHC) worker be reimbursed for the work he/she provides while traveling with a participant who is on vacation?***

Yes. A SHC worker can be paid for the time the SHC worker provides for actual services to the participant who is vacationing. A SHC worker can be paid with waiver program funds for provided services even if the services are outside of the participant's local community, or outside of the state. As long as a participant retains residency in Wisconsin, he/she can continue to participate in the waiver program, even though he/she may, on a short-term basis, be vacationing, or visiting outside of the state of Wisconsin. It is felt that a participant's use of a SHC worker's services while vacationing or while outside of his/her local community allows the participant to exercise greater independence.

While traveling with a participant some of the following SHC tasks may be allowable and therefore billable as a SHC function: assistance with meals, hands-on personal care, transfers, dressing, and needed supervision. It is good practice to have discussions between the participant, SHC provider, and care manager about what specific tasks and expectations the participant has for the provider, and, what tasks will and will not be fundable. These SHC tasks are billable under SPC code 104 – SHC.

When funding SHC services provided during a participant's vacation, it is important to consider the following:

- ◆ Waiver funds cannot be used to pay for vacation expenses anytime or SHC services when the participant is vacationing out of the country (i.e., visiting relatives, etc.).
- ◆ The cost of the participant's or SHC worker's transportation services delivered outside of the local community cannot be funded by the waiver program. The cost of needed transportation services (e.g., airfare, bus tickets, renting a car or van, train tickets, taxi services, or mileage reimbursement) when outside the local community is the responsibility of the participant and the SHC worker.
- ◆ The waiver program cannot fund the cost of either the participant's or SHC worker's lodging or meals. These costs are the responsibility of the participant and the SHC worker.
- ◆ The SHC service hours while traveling with the participant should be adjusted to reflect actual assistance provided. For example, when home, a participant may receive five hours/day for SHC tasks to complete needed meal preparation, housecleaning, personal care, and supervision tasks. However, when on vacation,

that same participant would continue to need assistance with his/her meals, personal care, and supervision; however, his/her care needs only equal three hours/day. The service hours are less in this instance because meal preparation and housecleaning tasks are not needed or provided when out of his/her home. The SHC worker is only paid for the three hours per day of direct service needed. When a SHC worker travels with a participant, even though he/she may be gone from his/her home all week, the SHC worker is not automatically reimbursed for 24 hr. care or full time employment.

***Question 7 – Can a SHC worker be paid by the waiver to clean a participant’s house while the participant is in a nursing home or hospital? For example, giving the house a good cleaning before the participant comes home?***

No. The only services that can be billed to the waiver program while a person resides in a hospital or nursing home are PERS (Personal Emergency Response System) and discharge-related care management, if discharge related care management is within 30 days of discharge.

***Question 8 – In addition to paying a supportive home care (SHC) provider for their time, can the waiver program cover any of the out-of-pocket costs incurred by the SHC provider when assisting a participant in his/her local community? Examples of these costs are:***

- ◆ ***Cost of a meal while eating out***
- ◆ ***Cost of admission to an activity (i.e., movie, concert, boat ride)***

Yes, indirectly. The above cited out-of-pocket costs could be reimbursed to the SHC provider if those costs are incorporated into the SHC rate paid by the waiver program and the activity is in the participant’s local community as defined by local county policy. Two recommended options for this are:

- ◆ Approved, out-of-pocket costs can be incorporated into the SHC provider agency’s hourly service rate, agency wide.
- ◆ Approved, out-of-pocket costs can be incorporated into the specific SHC worker’s hourly service rate on a case by case basis.

In other words, waiver funds can never be used to reimburse a SHC worker directly for any out-of-pocket expenses the worker may have incurred. Rather, the contracted agency is responsible for reimbursing their employees for the expenses. The contracted agency can do this by incorporating the expenses into their rate.

Transportation costs associated with travel out of the local community (which would include airline, extended bus trips, and train tickets) are not waiver allowable.

***Question 9 – Is it waiver allowable to fund the cost of garbage pick-up? What is waiver allowable with regard to tasks surrounding refuse disposal?***

It is allowable to fund the cost of garbage pick-up in those instances where the participant would otherwise be responsible for transporting the garbage to a landfill or pick up site. This is waiver allowable because garbage disposal is viewed as a routine

chore that the participant is responsible for completing and, it promotes a clean, healthy and safe environment for the participant. It is allowable to pay for a service vendor to pick-up and dispose of garbage under SPC 104.14 – SHC chore services/day. This may most likely occur in rural areas.

Please note, it is also waiver allowable to fund the cost of the SHC worker's time and mileage associated with taking garbage to the local landfill or pick up site.

***Question 10 – Can a spouse be paid with waiver funds to provide supportive home care tasks to the waiver participant?***

No. Waiver funds cannot be used to pay a spouse to complete supportive home care tasks, even if the spouse is employed by a supportive home care agency. A county can choose to use COP or other non-waiver funds to reimburse this service.

***Question 11 – Can a monetary value be assigned to the SHC tasks a spouse performs and counted as a medical/remedial expense?***

Yes. The monetary value of the service provided to the participant by his/her spouse may be counted as a remedial expense. The decision to allow such expenses must be affirmed by the local Long Term Support Committee, and the value attached must be consistently applied. For example, the Committee may determine that a type of service provided is comparable to a similar service provided by a home care agency and set the hourly rate value at a level at or near what the program would pay such an agency. This means that if the program would pay "Agency X" \$12.00 per hour, then the value of the spouse's hourly service is equal to that amount.

The care manager would need to determine the amount of service hours the spouse provides to the participant each month. The value of those services would equal the total hours per month times the dollar value attached. (In the example above, the value is set at \$12.00/hour. If the care manager determines the spouse provides 30 hours of such service per month, the total monthly remedial expense would be \$360.00.) The care manager would include this amount in the total monthly medical/remedial expenses reported to the ESS for both Group B and Group C participants. Thereafter, the care manager would be responsible for ongoing monitoring appropriate to the participant's Group B or C status.